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Department
of Human
Services

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Articles in Today's Clips

Tuesday, April 29, 2008

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

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Senate committee to study Nicholas Braman's death

Tuesday, April 29, 2008

By Theresa D. McClellan
The Grand Rapids Press

When state officials give testimony in Lansing today about how 9-year-old Nicholas Braman died last fall, the child's mother plans to give her input.

The state Senate's Families and Human Services Committee, chaired by Sen. Mark Jansen, R-Gaines Township, will hear testimony beginning at 4 p.m. from the director of Community Health and a state ombudsman on a report regarding the October death of the Montcalm County boy.

Nicholas Braman was left in the custody of his father, despite the knowledge of Children's Protective Services workers that his two older brothers had fled the home last summer after their father used an electric cattle prod on them, authorities have said. The father later pleaded guilty to that offense.

Nicholas' body was found in the home along with those of his father, Oliver Braman, 46, and his stepmother, Nancy Kaczor-Braman. They died of carbon monoxide poisoning, which the father had pumped into the home, authorities said. Nicholas left behind a note, saying he wanted to be with his father and stepmother "forever and ever."

The day his body was found, a CPS worker still was fighting efforts by a Montcalm County prosecutor to remove Nicholas from the home.

"The hearing is to get a clearer tap on procedures to avoid this happening again," said Jansen's chief of staff, Mike Gallagher.

"We're not looking to blame anybody, but get some answers and testimony on how it can be avoided and how services can be improved."

Earlier this year, a report by the state Department of Human Services determined child protection workers failed to do everything they could to safeguard Nicholas.

Today's hearing is a regularly scheduled meeting for the committee but is specifically for the Braman case.

Nicholas' mother, Rebecca Jasinski, planned to attend.

"I want things to change, and I don't want this to be forgotten," Jasinski said Monday from her Saginaw home.

Among the changes she would like to see "would be a statewide complaint number, instead of calling individual counties and letting employees decide whether it's a valid complaint, which is the problem in Montcalm County," she said.

Jasinski tried to have Nicholas and her two other sons removed from her ex-husband's home, despite confirmation from Saginaw CPS workers that physical abuse occurred there when she was married to Braman.

Jasinski also suggests a "random sampling" of complaints to see how they were resolved.

Mostly, she wants someone to care.

Send e-mail to the author: tmcclellan@grpress.com



Mich. lawmakers look into state's actions before boy's death

4/29/2008, 12:05 p.m. ET

By DAVID EGGERT
The Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — A state Senate panel will hold a hearing about child-welfare workers' actions before a 9-year-old boy was killed by his father in a rural county northeast of Grand Rapids.

Nicholas Braman died in October after his father, Oliver Braman, used a combination of an over-the-counter pain medication and carbon monoxide gas to kill his new wife, the boy and himself.

The state later issued a report saying state workers in Montcalm and Saginaw counties should have done more before the boy's death. Caseworkers previously had intervened to protect Nicholas Braman's older siblings from child abuse inflicted by their father.

But Nicholas Braman continued living with his dad after saying he hadn't been abused.

The hearing is scheduled for Tuesday afternoon.

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— THE — ANN ARBOR NEWS

Boy, 7, taken from family after drink mixup at Tigers game

Dad didn't know 'Mike's Lemonade' contained alcohol

Tuesday, April 29, 2008

BY JORDAN MILLER

The Ann Arbor News

The sign above the Comerica Park concession stand said: "Mike's Lemonade 7.00."

So when Christopher Ratte of Ann Arbor ordered one for his 7-year-old son at the April 5 Detroit Tigers game, he had no idea he was purchasing an alcoholic beverage.

Or that his son would end up spending three days and two nights in the custody of Children's Protective Services.

A park security guard spotted 7-year-old Leo Ratte drinking the Mike's Hard Lemonade, confiscated the bottle and took the family in for questioning.

The guard asked Christopher Ratte, a University of Michigan archaeology professor, if he knew he had given his son an alcoholic beverage. Ratte said no.

Then the matter was then turned over to police, per protocol for minor-in-possession cases, said Detroit Tigers vice president of communications Rob Matwick.

Leo was sent to Children's Hospital in Detroit, where he was examined, found to have no alcohol in his blood and cleared to go home. But he was instead taken into custody by Wayne County Children's Protective Services, a division of the state Department of Human Services.

Leo spent the night sleeping on a couch in the CPS building while Ratte and his wife, Claire Zimmerman, anxiously waited outside.

"Obviously, I made a mistake in buying this lemonade, which I didn't realize was alcoholic," Ratte said Monday. "I probably should have read the label carefully, so I'm not critical of the police who were concerned. I just thought they overreacted terribly."

CPS can take custody of a child with a court order after emergency removal by law enforcement, said Michigan DHS spokeswoman Colleen Steinman.

Don Duquette, a U-M clinical professor of law and director of the child advocacy law clinic, said he got a call from the chair of Ratte's U-M department at 9 a.m. the next day. Duquette spent most of that day on the phone, trying to get Leo back into his parents' custody.

In Michigan, law enforcement officers have the power to remove a child "whose surroundings are such as to endanger his or her health, morals, or welfare." That's not the same standard as federal law, which requires proof of immediate danger to a child, Duquette said.

Duquette said he encountered a bureaucratic run-around, and at one point was put on hold for more than an hour after calling an 800 number set up by CPS for quick response to child abuse crisis situations.

A court hearing was scheduled for that Monday afternoon, and Leo was taken to a foster home in an undisclosed location. At the hearing, the judge was prepared to take the advice of the assigned case worker, who recommended the case be extended for a week pending investigation, standard protocol in emergency custody cases.

But when a state official said they weren't interested in pursuing the case, the judge released Leo to his mother on the grounds that he have no contact with his father. Ratte would have to stay in a hotel until the matter was cleared.

Duquette said the fact that Ratte and Zimmerman got their son back so quickly was unusual and due only to their sophisticated legal counsel.

Ratte said he and his wife know that they were lucky to have the resources of U-M behind them.

"Class has something to do with the fact that the child was only in care for two days," Duquette said. "What the referee said was that she would have kept the case for at least a week while the department completed the investigation. ... If you're not sophisticated, the system isn't set up to give you very much of a chance to work against the ritual that's ordinarily done."

It took three more days for the judge to dismiss the complaint, allowing Ratte to return to his home. That happened after Leo and his 12-year-old sister, Helena, were taken back to Detroit for further interviews.

Ratte said Leo is doing well now.

"He described it as really weird, and said that he wanted to put it all behind him, and we do too," Ratte said. "But we explained to him that we're not ready to close the book on it quite yet. ..."

"It's an extraordinary power to delegate to the state to remove parents from the children. And yes, it was really awful, and we just hope our story can highlight the overreactions authorities sometimes make so that better guidelines can be instituted for the exercise of this power."

Jordan Miller can be reached at jmiller@annarbornews.com or 734-994-6679.

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ClickOnDetroit.com

Dad's Oversight Lands Son In Foster Care

POSTED: 10:44 am EDT April 28, 2008

UPDATED: 6:47 pm EDT April 28, 2008

ANN ARBOR, Mich. -- An Ann Arbor couple's 7-year-old son ended up in foster care over Mike's Hard Lemonade.

Christopher Ratte, 47, a professor at University of Michigan, claims he accidentally gave his son, Leo, some of the alcoholic beverage at Comerica Park a few weeks ago. He said he didn't even know the alcoholic lemonade existed.

"I got a beer for myself and asked Leo if he wanted a lemonade because there is a sign that said, 'Mike's Lemonade,'" said Ratte.

He said he bought his son the drink at the beginning of the Tigers game and it wasn't until the ninth inning when a security guard noticed the bottle in Leo's hand.

The security guard asked Ratte if he knew it contained alcohol. He said he didn't and when he went to grab the bottle out of the child's hand, the security guard grabbed it first.

"It's just the simple fact that I didn't know this brand and didn't suspect some of the lemonade sold in ballparks are alcoholic."

A short time later, Ratte was being questioned by Detroit police at Children's Hospital, where the child was taken by ambulance.

The child said he was feeling a little nauseated, but showed no other symptoms of being intoxicated.

The security guard said the boy drank about 12 ounces of the hard lemonade, which is about 5 percent alcohol.

However, the child's bloodwork detected no trace of alcohol.

The child remained in foster care for two days before his mother, Claire Zimmerman, a U-M architecture professor, was able to take their son home as long as the father relocated to a hotel.

It was two more weeks before the father could move back home. The last hearing closed the case.

Ratte and his wife have filed a formal complaint with the Child Protective Services ombudsman's office stating they thought the treatment was excessive.

"Fine this guy bought this drink for his son. We need to look into it, but we don't need to take the most extreme measures," Ratte said in reference to Child Protective Services.

Ratte has apologized for his mistake.

Tell us what you think [about this story](#).

RELATED TO STORY



**Video: Father Learns Hard Lesson
Over Mike's Hard Lemonade**

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Alcohol: 5%; common sense: 0

DETROIT FREE PRESS

APRIL 29, 2008

In response to Brian Dickerson's April 28 column, "Hard lemonade, hard price; Dad's oversight at Tigers game lands son in foster care": What hath God wrought, here in the People's Republic of Michigan? What's next for Christopher Ratte? Will he be sent away to be rehabilitated? Will the Ministry of Truth seek to delete the Detroit Free Press' reportage of this episode?

Fortunately, the Ministry of Love reunited Mr. Ratte with his family, rather than submitting him to a purge. The party must have been satisfied he had not committed a thought crime.

When one reads this story, hard on the heels of the previous day's exposé of the flawed prosecution process for sex offenders in Oakland County, it is clear that in its zeal to protect our children, our state and local law enforcement agencies have gone completely haywire.

Unquestionably, our children are the most powerless and vulnerable of our citizenry, the least able to defend or speak for themselves. Their protection is simply paramount. Nonetheless, whither sanity, reason and justice along the way?

After the Free Press reported the structural failure of the foster care system in Michigan, it would appear that overkill is the state's solution to that problem. It is not enough that the state ran roughshod on Mr. Ratte; his son, the very victim they sought to protect, must have been traumatized to no end. Meanwhile, how many other children who are truly in grave danger of one form or another are left unprotected by Child Protective Services?

The entire child welfare system, from state agencies to the courts to the law enforcement agencies, is overworked and underfunded. Nonetheless, knee-jerk Orwellian overreaction is not the answer. We must have a thoughtful dialogue on this issue, starting in Lansing.

Lawrence D. Hadley

West Bloomfield

Poorly handled

It's too bad that Christopher Ratte had to go through this mess. It seems as if the whole thing was handled poorly at best, but it's still a lesson learned. I think everyone involved got a valuable lesson about what to do in such situations. I'm sure in years to come this is going to be a good story being told at the Ratte family reunions. But I don't know what shocked me the most, the story or the prices of the beverages.

Robert Denstedt

Canton

Overzealous

The story about the Ratte family and their spiked lemonade ordeal, courtesy of an overzealous bureaucracy, was disconcerting, to say the least.

It's a perfect example of how, once it kicks into gear, a bureaucracy will run its sometimes inane course because a person in authority who has the chance to exercise common sense to stop it lacks the courage to do so.

Another disturbing aspect of this story: that we live in a culture that feels the need to put alcohol in lemonade! What are we thinking ?

Bernie R. Klein

Ann Arbor

Trampled rights

As a parent who is looking forward to home-schooling as my children get older, I am well aware that the government needs to be reined in where parental rights are concerned.

Why is it so easy to hold the parent guilty without presumption of innocence?

Let us make it harder for the state to step into our homes and personal lives.

Minesh Baxi

Troy

Blatant nonsense

What is this? Are you trying to get the mayor's fiasco off the front page of the Free Press by putting on what basically is the lynching of a young lad, the son of Professor Christopher Ratte and his wife?

My husband and I are appalled by the actions of most all involved, not the father by any means. I didn't know either for two years or more that Mike's Hard Lemonade was spiked; I never even tasted it and never will.

Hey, will you all grow up -- that means, city services, Child Protective Services, the police officers, the guard and any others involved? We are sick of such blatant nonsense.

Sharon Warner

Novi

Poker-playing mom faces child neglect charges

Tuesday, April 29, 2008

By Barton Deiters
The Grand Rapids Press

WYOMING -- A weeping Grandville mother was in District Court on Monday facing a charge of child neglect for allegedly leaving her three children in her car while she played poker at a local bar.

According to police, Diem Thi Tran was at a charity poker event at Woody's Press Box, 5656 Clyde Park Ave. SW, around 1:17 a.m. on Wednesday when an officer found Tran's three children asleep in her car in the bar and bowling alley's parking lot.

The Wyoming Police report stated witnesses claimed the children -- ages 5, 10 and 15 -- had been in the car for as long as three hours. Tran also was charged with no valid insurance and defective equipment on the car.

In Wyoming District Court, Tran covered her face as she spoke to Judge Pablo Cortes through a friend who translated her Vietnamese.

"I give my key to go to car for half-an-hour," Tran told the judge during the arraignment. "Not three hours."

No one from the Kent County prosecutor's office was present and Tran did not have an attorney as she first tried to enter a guilty plea.

But Cortes determined Tran did not have a grasp of her rights and what a guilty plea would entail and entered a plea of not guilty on her behalf. He told her she would meet with prosecutors and could decide later how she wanted to plead to the charges.

Cortes also told her it would be a good idea to secure a lawyer.

If convicted, Tran could face maximum penalties of 93 days in jail and a \$500 fine on the misdemeanor charge.

Tran looked around at the gathered cameras and asked if she was going to be on television and, when Cortes told her it was likely, she muttered "I want to kill myself; this make me crazy."

Cortes assured her that just because she faces the jail and fines that it does not mean she will get the maximum fine or spend time in jail.

Cortes learned the children have been tended to by Child Protective Services and they are with their father, although Tran does live with the children and their father.

She was released on a \$5,000 personal recognizance bond pending a pretrial conference.

Send e-mail to the author: bdeiters@grpress.com



April 29, 2008

Missing Mich. teen found safe

Midday update

Associated Press

WAYLAND - A southwestern Michigan teenager has been found safe in Tennessee after disappearing over the weekend.

WOOD-TV in Grand Rapids says 15-year-old Wesley Ayers of Wayland turned up in Athens, Tenn., on Tuesday morning. Athens is about halfway between Chattanooga and Knoxville.

He was found sleeping in a car in a Wal-Mart parking lot.

A 24-year-old man who is believed to have talked the teen into leaving home and a 19-year-old neighbor of Ayers also have been found in the car.

All three are in police custody.

An Amber Alert issued Monday has been canceled.

WMSH-AM in Sturgis says Ayers' mother discovered her son missing from their apartment early Saturday.

Pinwheel power



Forest Park fourth graders in the classes of teachers Maxine Henry and Alice Clement participated in a blue-ribbon formation with their blue and silver pinwheels as part of the Iron-Dickinson Children's Advocacy Network (CAN) Council's message that April is Child Abuse and Neglect Awareness Month. Coordinated by CAN's Vicki West, the youngsters formed a "blue ribbon" in front of the courthouse on Friday, April 25, before taking their pinwheels back to school where they were "planted" in front of the school sign.

Tuesday, April 29, 2008

Kids say MSU donor is deadbeat dad

He says mom is owed \$45K in child support; trustee says college will keep gift.

Kim Kozlowski / The Detroit News

Gordy Bradbury is furious that his dad, who told him for years that he couldn't afford to pay child support, was able to bequeath \$1 million to Michigan State University.

That's why Bradbury, 24, is lobbying MSU trustees to divert \$45,600 of Gregory E. Bradbury's bequest to his mother because that's what the elder Bradbury owes in child support after his parents' 2001 divorce.

"How can somebody get away with that?" asked Gordy Bradbury, who lives in Minneapolis and recently found out about the donation after Googling his dad. "It's pretty unfair (my dad) can put up that kind of money but is unwilling to help his own blood."

MSU officials say it's unlikely the younger Bradbury will get any of the \$1 million his father pledged to MSU's business school and library in 2004.

"We don't have the money," University Relations Vice President Terry Denbow said, indicating a bequest is delivered upon someone's death. "You can't give back what you don't have."

Bradbury, an MSU alum and member of the university's Foundation board, acknowledged he had not paid child support but wouldn't explain why.

"This is a very personal matter," said the elder Bradbury, a native of North Muskegon now living in North Carolina. "I don't think it's something that is

anything other than very personal. I deeply regret difficulties for all concerned."

A few MSU trustees also consider the matter private.

"That's between him and them," said Joel Ferguson, Board of Trustees chairman. "We'll keep the money. He's got to get a good lawyer. It's his dad's money. We accept the gift in the spirit of giving."

But Bradbury's daughter, Elinor, said failure to pay support is a national public policy issue.

"This is an issue that hundreds of thousands of families are struggling with -- men who are abdicating their responsibility as parents," said Bradbury, 20. "It's just not fair to the mothers and the children, too."

Nationally, more than \$100 billion in child support has not been collected since 1975, according to the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement. In 2006, more than 17 million children were owed more than \$29 billion in child support, but collections were made in only 54 percent of the cases, according to a preliminary 2006 federal report.

Greg and Katherine Bradbury married in 1980, and divorced 21 years later. At the time, their two children were minors: Gordon was 16 and Elinor was 13.

According to the divorce decree, Bradbury operated a financial services company known as The Bradbury Group Inc. and Intervend Services Inc., the assets of which were sold for \$99,500. Bradbury was ordered to pay child support of \$800 a month in 2001, then \$1,000 beginning July 2002. He also was ordered to keep health and life insurance for the two children and his former wife.

But he never paid any of it and that's why two civil judgments were filed against him in 2001 for \$45,600 in unpaid child support, not including interest, according to the family attorney, Robert Due of Minneapolis. With interest, Bradbury owes about \$59,000.

In 2004, three years after the judgments were filed, Bradbury was publicly recognized by MSU for bequeathing \$1 million as part of a capital campaign to raise \$1.2 billion to grow the university's endowment. At the time, he was a member of the President's Campaign Cabinet.

Bradbury said he supported the university for years before his children were born. "This was a final manifestation," he said. "It's just a bequest that I hope to fulfill someday."

But his children say their mother sacrificed because he failed to support them. Even then, some things had to go. Elinor was a nationally ranked skier but had to give the sport up because her mom couldn't afford it.

Meanwhile, Gordon struggled with the pain of his parents' split and went into treatment for alcohol abuse.

Katherine Bradbury, 54, was never on public assistance and she thinks that's why Minnesota gave up trying to collect from her ex-husband after their children turned 18. Her ex-husband moved several times, she said, and settled in North Carolina.

Minnesota officials contacted North Carolina officials three times to verify Bradbury's address, according to Brad Deen, spokesman for the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services. In June 2005, North Carolina authorities provided Bradbury's address to Minnesota officials. But a month earlier, Elinor turned 18, making both Bradbury children legal adults.

"They basically said the (state's child support) caseload is heavy, he's out of state and my kids were 18," Katherine Bradbury said. "They didn't feel there was any urgency. They said if I had been on public assistance, they would have been much more helpful."

Debbie Kline, executive director of the Cleveland-based Association for Children for the Enforcement of Child Support, said she's never heard of a parent who failed their child support obligations while making a large philanthropic pledge.

"It's horrible," Kline said. "If he's got a million dollars to leave to MSU that means the man has money. Once again you have another case of everyone forgetting what this is all about. It's about support for the children. It's about making sure the children live up to the same standards (as) if the two adults stayed together."

Gordy Bradbury hopes his family can collect the money that is due them. "At the very least, I hope my mom can get some retribution for what she's given up," Gordy Bradbury said.

You can reach Kim Kozlowski at (313) 222-2024 or kkozlowski@detnews.com.



Domestic standoff ends peacefully

Tuesday, April 29, 2008

LOWELL -- An overnight standoff ended peacefully this morning when a man who allegedly threatened his wife with a gun surrendered, police said. The couple's 2-year-old boy was inside the house sleeping, but was unhurt, Kent County Sheriff Larry Stelma said. Police closed a one-mile stretch of M-21 in eastern Kent County during the six-hour standoff, which began about 11:30 p.m. Police surrounded the house and, just after 4 a.m., sent in a state police camera-equipped robot to locate the suspect. Police then entered the house and arrested the man inside.

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Event helps all get needed care

Expo in Detroit is part of a weeklong effort to raise awareness and deliver resources

DETROIT FREE PRESS

APRIL 29, 2008

As part of weeklong Cover the Uninsured Week events, community and government health agencies conducted a Health Expo for the Uninsured on Monday at Cobo Hall's Riverfront Ballroom in Detroit.

The event provided help in enrolling in Medicaid and other programs and free cholesterol, blood pressure and other screenings. Participants also received free parking and breakfast.

For more details on free screenings and other events this week, go to www.covertheuninsured.org and enter Michigan in the search field.

Kami Pothukuchi: State gambles with families on food stamp distributions

Twice-a-month payments are questionable idea

Lansing State Journal

April 29, 2008

Gov. Jennifer Granholm has signed into law a change in the distribution of Bridge Card (food stamp) benefits from once a month to twice a month. The change will affect households receiving \$100 or more a month - about 78 percent of the state's caseload.

The law is problematic on many grounds. First, lawmakers did not consult Bridge Card recipients on how the change will affect them. Second, they did not consider alternative solutions to the problems they sought to resolve through the change. Third, supporters' claims that recipients will buy more fresh foods as a result are untested.

This change is the result of lobbying by the state's grocers, who face real problems that deserve thoughtful solutions. In many neighborhoods, food stamps are a big part of stores' revenues. Because benefits are distributed early in the month, such stores face a boom-and-bust monthly business cycle. Other states address this problem by staggering single payments to households throughout the month.

A majority of Bridge Card recipients prefer once-a-month distribution, according to a survey sponsored by the Michigan Department of Human Services. Because the survey did not ask recipients their benefit amounts, it was dismissed by the law's advocates, who argued that opponents of the change will likely be unaffected by it.

Focus groups in an ongoing study led by me in southeastern Michigan, however, raise specific concerns.

Recipients worry about not being able to take advantage of sales, and about getting even less food than before if stores stop offering end-of-the-month sales. Transportation problems, rising gasoline prices and disability threaten to make grocery shopping more difficult for affected seniors and families with special needs. For example, one Detroit-area parent drives more than 20

miles one way to a specialty store to buy food for his child, who suffers from celiac disease.

Some focus group participants do support a twice-monthly distribution. These include mothers who find it easier to budget for groceries two weeks at a time, and who find the prospect of shorter periods of want every two weeks more bearable than longer periods once a month. Some also seek external control over their budgets when overwhelmed with requests for food assistance from acquaintances experiencing crises of their own.

Will Bridge Card recipients buy more fresh fruits and vegetables than before? The groups suggest that this is less likely.

Recipients who buy fresh foods now already budget and shop weekly. Those who purchase few fresh foods currently blame inadequate benefit levels, which will be unaffected by the change in distribution. At about \$1 per person per meal, benefits are simply too low to include enough fresh fruits and vegetables, which tend to be more expensive than canned ones.

The Department of Human Services, the agency responsible for implementing the law, now awaits federal clearance for twice-monthly distribution of food stamps. Meanwhile, as all of us experience sticker shock in grocery store aisles and at the gas pump, many Bridge Card recipients grow doubly anxious about putting enough food on their tables.

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Number of homeless on the rise

Local agencies assist with housing for those in need

By LISA M. REED, Staff Writer

POSTED: April 28, 2008

IRON MOUNTAIN — Homeless is defined as anybody in a shelter.

At the end of 2007, there were 23 chronically homeless persons in Dickinson and Iron counties, according to information compiled by the Dickinson Iron Community Services Agency (DICSA).

Mark Rose, housing resource information specialist for DICSA, said the campaign to end homelessness in Michigan began in 2006. The campaign spans all interested groups. Those being shelters, housing providers, service providers, state and local agencies, foundations, business and private citizens.

"If you have a roof over your head, you're not homeless. If you are living with family and friends, you're not homeless. If you lost jobs and can't pay rent, you're not homeless," Rose said.

Rose said Dickinson and Iron counties do not have a lot of people living on park benches. He said in the summer, homeless people will live in tents and come fall, they will go to a shelter or live with family or friends.

But with the mortgage crisis and the difficult economic times the country is facing, local agencies are seeing an increase in the number of people classified as homeless.

"It is definitely increasing," said Shelley Byrne, contracted housing agent with the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA).

The authority helps homeless people with rent assistance after they are verified that they are homeless. To qualify, a person must be in a homeless shelter, such as the Salvation Army or the Caring House.

"Previously called section 8, now Housing Choice Voucher Program or HCVP — what we do is we help with rent assistance," Byrne said. "Rent and utilities is based on 30 percent of gross income."

She said the difference between the authority and rent assistance programs, such as Westwood Apartments, Norwood Apartments, Strawberry Lakes Apartments, etc. is that with MSHDA, the tenant can pick where they want to live, such as a house, as long as the landlord is willing to work with MSHDA.

Steve Gagne, executive director for Iron County Housing Commission, a federal housing program that works Housing and Urban Development, said a homeless person is someone without a permanent address, living in their vehicle, at a relatives or friend's, abused victims, incarcerated or institutionalized.

Article Photos



Mark Rose, housing resource information specialist for DICSA, explains the application process for housing assistance to clients at the Salvation Army. Homelessness is on the rise due to difficult economic times.

"We take their application and try to place them in a unit right away," he said.

Caring House and Salvation Army are emergency housing in Dickinson County.

"We only serve victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and their children," said Cheryl O'Neil, executive director of the Caring House and chair of the Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence. "And it's both MSHDA and the National Coalition that agree domestic violence is the leading cause of homelessness for women and children."

O'Neil said the Caring House does have apartments for male victims of domestic violence in addition to apartments for female victims. The maximum stay of 30 days is adjusted according to the victim's needs.

There are also several substance abuse programs in the county.

Bryne said previously, homeless persons had more substance abuse issues.

"Now it is getting where they are losing jobs and then housing. Domestic violence also happens," she said. "Yes, they will always have those issues as well. We had a number of people from substance abuse and more now because of economic times."

Rose agreed.

"There is an increase a little bit because of economic conditions," he said. "I always say you are two paychecks away from being homeless."

First Presbyterian Church, Trinity United Methodist Church and First United Methodist Church provide community meals.

Food pantries include Dickinson-Iron Community Service Agency, First Lutheran Church, Maranatha Messengers, New Hope Church of God, Niagara Area Assistance Program, Norway Community Food Pantry, St. Vincent De Paul, Salvation Army and the SHARE program.

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Lenawee jobless rate rises to 9.4 percent

Daily Telegram

Mon Apr 28, 2008, 08:05 PM EDT

ADRIAN, Mich. -

Fewer jobs and more workers equaled a 9.4 percent jobless rate for Lenawee County in March, an increase from the 9.2 percent rate during the first two months of the year, according to figures released last week by the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth.

All four neighboring Michigan counties saw their jobless rates edge down in March while the state's overall jobless rate remained unchanged at 7.2 percent.

Lenawee County lost 31 jobs in March while 116 people joined the labor force, boosting the number of people counted as unemployed to 4,757, according to state figures. The county's labor force was estimated at 50,439, with 45,682 employed. The number of employed workers was down about 600 from March 2007, when the jobless rate was 8.1 percent.

Monroe County saw the largest improvement among Lenawee County's neighbors last month as its jobless rate dropped from 7.6 percent to 6.5 percent. Washtenaw County's rate fell from 4.9 percent to 4.6 percent, Jackson County from 8.3 percent to 7.9 percent and Hillsdale County from 9.4 percent to 9.1 percent.

The continuing high jobless rate is blamed on the long-term decline in manufacturing.

"The loss of manufacturing jobs that started at the turn of the millennium is being felt in other sectors, retail trade, lodging and restaurants, etc., that depended on manufacturing income. Moreover, ongoing troubles in the housing sector are negatively affecting employment in the construction sector," said a labor department analysis of employment in the 12-county region that includes Lenawee County.

Ten of the 12 counties saw slight declines in their March jobless rates as warm-weather activities such as lodging and restaurants, construction and business services provided a seasonal boost. St. Joseph County also saw a higher jobless rate, but Lenawee County was the only one in the region to see a decline in the number of employed workers in March. Employment was down from March 2007 in all counties except Berrien County, due mainly to the opening of a tribal-owned casino in New Buffalo in August.

MORNING SUN

Thrift Shop struggles to attract donations

By Lisa Satayut
Sun Staff Writer

The Thrift Shop, which donates all proceeds to the Isabella County Child Development Center, has seen better days.

It's 10:30 a.m. on a weekday and the store is empty. Typically by this time, the store would be busy with shoppers who are looking to find a bargain or community members dropping off donations.

But that hasn't been happening lately.

For the past few months, store volunteer Kay Crain has been trying to understand why donations have been drastically decreasing.

"It's been bad," Crain said.

"Either people are holding on to their stuff, or they're selling it," she said.

Crain also wonders if the opening of the newly relocated Salvation Army thrift store has played a role in the decrease of donations to the shop.

Crain said the Thrift Shop, which opened in 1969, was the first store of its kind in Mt. Pleasant. Since then the shop has been able to send more than 1,000 children to preschool, supplying them with materials, toys and any other need the child may have.

"It helps the children," Crain said of the proceeds.

"All funds are local and stay in Mt. Pleasant."

Due to the small size of the shop, it carries mostly clothing, books and other small items.

Crain is among 26 people who volunteer their time to the Thrift Shop. She has been volunteering since 1970 and said the shop has moved around over the years. Currently it is located at 1125 N. Mission Street near the Secretary of State's office.

As volunteer Trudy Wood organized the racks of clothing, she talked about the drop in donations.

"We could use more," Wood said. "It goes to a good cause," she said.

Wood said she volunteers her time because she loves being around people. But more importantly because she knows her efforts are going to help the county Child Development Center.

"I really enjoy it," she said.

Crain said the store also has volunteers from Farwell High School, Beal City High School and the Central Michigan University Mortar Board on Saturday's.

She said the Thrift Store has been able to help low income families through the generous donations from the community.

"We are low on donations now and could use some help," she said.

The store is open Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. On Saturday store hours are 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

The store is unable to take larger donations like TVs and computers due to the small size of the shop, but Crain said smaller appliances that are in working condition are accepted. Crain asked that clothing be clean and folded to avoid wrinkles.

To contact the Thrift Store for the Isabella County Child Development Center call (989) 773-9544.

For a map of the location go to the The Sun Insider blog,

Click here to return to story:

http://www.themorningsun.com/stories/042908/loc_thrift.shtml